

# **Integration Panel Explanation of Decision on Proposal 98-A1004 "Opening up Butte Creek Canyon to Salmon and Steelhead Fish Passage."**

May 12, 1999

This proposal presented a conundrum to the Integration Panel because it accentuates areas of conflict among the goals of the CALFED Restoration Coordination Program. The crux of this conflict involves biological merit and implementability.

The proposal's biological merit derives from addressing habitat needs of spring-run chinook salmon; a species whose habitat has been dramatically reduced in the CALFED solution area, and a priority species for restoration which is listed as threatened under the California Endangered Species Act and proposed for listing as endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act. The proposal has the potential to provide answers to important questions about habitat capacity in the upper Butte Creek watershed, and the possible ramifications of barrier removal on both local landowners and the operation of Pacific Gas and Electric facilities.

The current proposal, however, may not be implementable. Attempts to reconcile differences between the local conservancy and the proposal's principal investigator have been unsuccessful. Members of the Upper Butte Creek Watershed Conservancy have recently re-affirmed their intention to oppose the proposal. The proposal, nonetheless, continues to misrepresent the opinion of the Conservancy, despite opportunities for the principal investigator to make revisions. Also of concern is the proposal's lack of recognition of the biological significance of interbasin water transfers from the Feather River to Butte Creek; this water, which cannot be appropriated by downstream diverters, increases instream flow and reduces water temperatures.

The Integration Panel considers the level of local opposition to this proposal to be sufficiently strong and representative of diverse interests in the watershed to prevent this project from being successfully implemented if funding were granted at the present time. This opposition would likely preclude completion of task 1 (establish and maintain community support and technical guidance for the project) and task 8 (obtain public and peer review of the draft plan), both of which are essential to project success. Local opposition could also increase the difficulty of data collection tasks (3, 4, and 5).

Further discussions among stakeholders and the principal investigator should yield a new proposal with a broader, less contentious, perspective. Regarding the current proposal, however, the Integration Panel re-affirms its previous recommendation that the proposal not receive funding, especially given the large number of worthy and implementable alternative projects.